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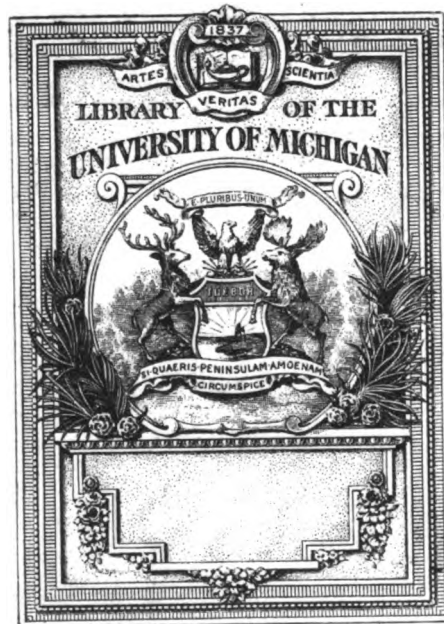
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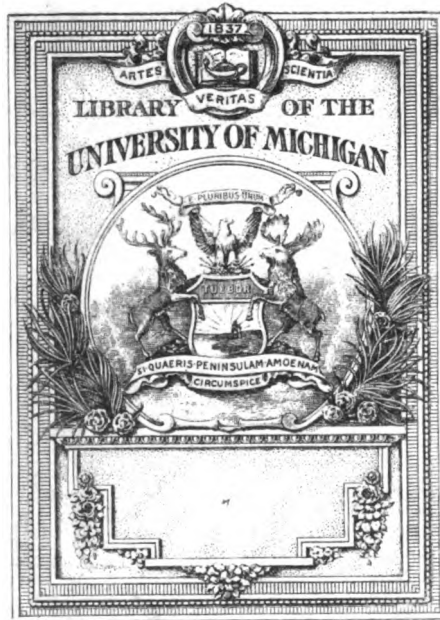
ROMAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

PARTICULARLY AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS

BY

*from*

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### NOTE

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Andrew F. West

Princeton University  
February, 1901



ROMAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
PARTICULARLY AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS<sup>1</sup>

I

As no book perfectly conceals the traits of its writer, there is an indefinite sense in which all literature may be said to be autobiographical. Diaries, journals and letters at once occur as strongly marked examples. It is a short step from these to tales of adventure and travel, to histories of campaigns written by generals who led them, to biographies revealing the describer quite as clearly as the person he describes, and only another step to meditations and lyric verse, while a last step may bring us to books in general, inasmuch as in some degree, no matter how faint, they all mirror the traits of their composers.

Yet all literature, though in this general sense autobiographical, is not autobiography, which is but a small part of literature. While we may not be able to frame a perfect definition that shall include autobiographies only, we are none the less assured that autobiography is a distinct thing. Some books, indeed, conform so closely to the character of self-written lives that it is not easy

<sup>1</sup> In this lecture I desire to bring out collaterally three facts which have not received recognition in histories of literature: first, that autobiography is unknown in classical Greek literature; second, that it is a native form of Latin literature; and third, that both types of

autobiography, the objective and the introspective, originated in Latin literature. A fourth fact, little noticed, is that 'autobiography' is evidently a word of recent coinage, and probably not yet a century old.

to decide whether they fall just inside or just outside our class. Others, like Caesar's *Commentaries* and Cicero's *Letters*, though packed with autobiographical material, stand a little farther removed, and at a still greater distance we may place such a book as the *Anabasis* of Xenophon, for while it contains much personal history, it is personal history inwoven in a larger narrative. But neither collections of letters, nor narratives of campaigns related by those who conducted them, nor even diaries and journals, though abounding in the stuff of which autobiographies are made, are themselves autobiographies. For in its normal sense an autobiography implies two things,—first, with respect to substance, that the writer's own life is the sole or principal theme, and second, with respect to literary form, that the book is a fairly continuous unified history. The *Life* of Franklin, the *Memoirs* of Gibbon, the *Confessions* of Rousseau, the *Life* of Benvenuto Cellini,—these and such as these are well-understood examples of autobiography.

## II

It is a form of writing which seems to have been utterly unknown in the classical period of Greek literature, and even in later Greek until about the time of the Christian era.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, an old native form of Latin literature.<sup>2</sup> Tacitus tells us the writing of

<sup>1</sup> Suidas mentions the book of Nicholas of Damascus (who lived 37-4 B. C. in the palace of the Jewish king Herod); *περὶ τοῦ ἰδίου βίου καὶ τῆς ἐαυτοῦ ἀγωγῆς*, and the book of Libanius of Antioch (314-393 A. D.); *λόγος περὶ τῆς ἐαυτοῦ τῶχης*.

See Bergk, *Griech. Litteraturgeschichte*, i 291, Berlin 1872.

<sup>2</sup> On Roman autobiographies generally consult the old but valuable monograph of Suringar: *De Romanis Autobiographis*, Leyden 1846. For the period of the Empire consult Peter, *Geschichtliche Litteratur über die römische Kaiserzeit*, i 372-377.

autobiographies was *antiquitus usitatum*,<sup>1</sup> common in the time of the Republic, and that 'many thought the writing of their own lives was a mark of conscious rectitude rather than of arrogance.'<sup>2</sup> These earliest books are lost, though some mention of them remains. Aemilius Scaurus, twice consul (115 and 107 B. C.) and subsequently censor and *princeps senatus*, wrote the story of his stormy life in three books as a justification of his political conduct. Cicero speaks well,<sup>3</sup> even too well, of the reliability and personal dignity of the writer, but hints that his style lacked finish.<sup>4</sup> As for his three books, they are *sane utiles; quos nemo legit*.<sup>5</sup> His younger contemporary Rutilius Rufus was more accomplished. He was a Stoic philosopher, a jurist, a respectable orator and the writer of a history of Rome in Greek. His honesty as a public officer brought on him the hatred of the venal publicans whose extortions he had exposed. Unjustly banished in 92 B. C., he retired to Smyrna where he wrote an account of his public life.<sup>6</sup> It is a pity his book is lost, for although it was probably little else than a vindication of his acts, he deserved such vindication. It was doubtless better written than the memoirs of Scaurus and was carefully truthful in spirit, as Plutarch's characterization (*φιλαλήθης ἀνὴρ*)<sup>7</sup> may well lead us to believe. There is a third autobiography belonging to this time, written by Quintus Lutatius Catulus, consul in 102 B. C. He commanded one army and Marius the other in the campaign against the Cimbri, and soon after fell a victim to the Marian proscription. His style, as Cicero testifies in one of those un-

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus: *Agricola* I

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus: *Agricola* I

<sup>3</sup> Cicero: *Brutus* 111 and 112

<sup>4</sup> Cicero: *De Oratore* i 49, *prudentia tamen rerum magnarum magis quam arte dicendi nititur*.

<sup>5</sup> Cicero: *Brutus* 112, *tres ad L. Fufidium libri scripti de vita ipsius sane utiles; quos nemo legit*.

<sup>6</sup> Charisius: *Gramm. Lat.* p. 139

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch: *Marius* 28, *ὥς δὲ 'Ρουτίλιος ἱστορεῖ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα φιλαλήθης ἀνὴρ*.

translatable phrases that attach moral goodness to fine diction, embodied the *incorrupta Latini sermonis integritas* and, in the judgment of the same critic, was fit to be compared with the pleasant manner of Xenophon.<sup>1</sup>

Passing to the time of the civil wars, we encounter the memoirs of the dictator Sulla (138-78 B. C.) written at Naples after his retirement from public life.<sup>2</sup> His ambitious account had already filled twenty-two books, when it was suddenly broken off by his death. It was completed by his freedman, Cornelius Epicadus. The object of these commentaries, as they were styled later,<sup>3</sup> was to exhibit the whole of Sulla's career. Roman *superbia*, selfish and cruel, and glorification of the author as a favorite of the gods compose the tone of the narrative. Scraps of the memoirs remain, but otherwise the work is lost, save as Plutarch has drawn on it for his lives of Marius and Sulla. It is a great loss, in spite of its distorted presentations, inasmuch as we so often get at the truth through a writer's very perversions. Still it is not so much as autobiography, but as material for history we regret its destruction. We can more easily spare the author's self-painted idealized portrait than those vigorous sketches of the dreadful scenes in which he figured.

<sup>1</sup> Cicero: Brutus 132

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch: Lucullus I, Sulla 4 and 37

<sup>3</sup> The original name is *res gestae* or *rerum gestarum libri*. Niese (p. 127 in iii 5 of Iwan von Müller's Handbuch) says of Sulla: 'Er hat Aufzeichnungen in griechischer Sprache (ὑπομνήματα) hinterlassen, von denen in den Biographien Plutarch's noch Reste erhalten sind.' Is there any authority, except the name ὑπομνήματα given by Plutarch, for supposing Sulla

wrote his book in Greek? It should be remembered that Plutarch also calls the memoirs τὰς αὐτοῦ πράξεις (Lucullus I), which points plainly to an original *res gestae*. There is no reason to doubt Sulla wrote in Latin. Whether there was a Greek version, is another matter, though there is no evidence for it. All the Latin writers, who quote it, quote literally and in Latin. But I find nothing in Plutarch's references that looks like an exact quotation.



The learned Varro wrote *de vita sua* in three books.<sup>1</sup> As for Cicero, nothing could keep him from autobiography. In his letter, asking Lucceius to write up his deeds, he says: 'If you will not consent, I shall perhaps be forced to do what some censure: I shall write about myself.'<sup>2</sup> Little forcing was needed. In the year 60 he finished a commentary in Greek on his consulship and informed Atticus he meant to prepare a Latin version.<sup>3</sup> He asked Atticus to see that transcripts were placed in Athens and other Greek cities, and bored Caesar<sup>4</sup> and Pompey<sup>5</sup> by sending each a copy. He also wrote in Latin a tasteless *Poëma* on the same theme and followed this effusion with an epic in three books, *De Temporibus Suis*.<sup>6</sup> 'O that he had been more modest in verse!' is the sigh of his wise critic Quintilian.<sup>7</sup>

We need not linger here over the familiar and incomparable *Commentaries* of Julius Caesar. As the two thousandth anniversary of his birth approaches, the 'Gallic War,' through which a firsthand knowledge of his character comes to most of us, still remains the one classical book in most general use. And it matches the man. 'He wrote,' says Quintilian, 'in the way he fought.'<sup>8</sup> The book is not properly an autobiography, but rather *mémoires pour servir*, a well digested series of notes recording year by year the conquest of Gaul. The great captain strictly refrains from expatiating on his motives or making a show of his behavior. Yet he did not really conceal himself, and his *Commentaries* are autobiographical, not in the way of

<sup>1</sup> Peter: *Historicorum Romanorum Fragmenta*, Ed. 1883, p. 236

<sup>2</sup> *Ad Fam.* v 12

<sup>3</sup> *Ad Atticum* i 19, 20

<sup>4</sup> *Ad Quint.* fr. ii 165

<sup>5</sup> *Ad Fam.* v 7, 3. Peter: *Hist. Rom. Frag.* p. 209, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Suringar: *De Romanis Autobiographis*, pp. 24, 25. See also Teuffel-Schwabe, 190, 3, and Schanz (2nd Ed. 1898) in Iwan von Müller's *Handbuch*, viii 1, 394.

<sup>7</sup> *Inst. Or.* xi 1, 24

<sup>8</sup> *Inst. Or.* x 1, 114

an assertion, but by constant implication. He is always behind the lines.

### III

A new series begins with Augustus,—the autobiographies of Emperors.<sup>1</sup> About the middle of his reign he composed memoirs in thirteen books,<sup>2</sup> probably entitled *Commentaries*, and dedicated the work to Maecenas and Agrippa.<sup>3</sup> Like other performances of its author, it served as an example for his successors. It was an example likely to find favor in the eyes of self-aggrandizing rulers, unless, as too often happened, they were stolidly indifferent to all forms of literature, except the easily obtained panegyrics of a servile court.

We may notice briefly these imperial Lives. Tiberius described his career in short sketchy commentaries<sup>4</sup> full of false coloring, and we are assured by Suetonius they were almost the only books Domitian cared to read.<sup>5</sup> Claudius, with some ele-

<sup>1</sup> Under the Empire there was very little autobiography outside the imperial family. Peter observes: 'Bald aber musste man sich überzeugen, dass für autobiographische Darstellungen ausserhalb des Hofes kein Platz mehr gelassen sei, und wenn auch einzelne Verfasser in der Behandlung der Zeitgeschichte ihre Person nicht vergessen haben werden, die Autobiographie beschränkt sich seit Tiberius auf den Hof.' *Geschichtliche Litteratur über die römische Kaiserzeit*, ii 202, Leipzig 1897. Consult also ii 372-377.

<sup>2</sup> It was after 9 B. C. Suetonius: Augustus 85, aliqua de vita sua quam

tredecim libris, Cantabrico tenuis bello nec ultra, composuit.

<sup>3</sup> Plutarch: comp. Demosth. cum Cic. 3, ἐν τοῖς πρὸς Ἀγρίππαν καὶ Μαϊκήραν ὑπομνήμασιν. Agrippa wrote an autobiography. See Philarg. ad Verg. georg. ii 162, Agrippa in secundo vitae suae dicit.

<sup>4</sup> Suetonius: Tiberius 67, commentario quem de vita sua summatim breviterque composuit. See Teuffel-Schwabe, 275.

<sup>5</sup> Suetonius: Domitianus 20, praeter commentarios et acta Tiberii Caesaris nihil lectitabat.

gance of manner, wrote eight insipid books on his own life.<sup>1</sup> His Empress, the infamous Agrippina (15-59 A.D.), mother of Nero, also wrote memoirs which, unluckily for her, fell into the hands of Tacitus.<sup>2</sup> In the next generation we meet with memoirs by Vespasian.<sup>3</sup> Passing down the imperial line we can hardly help pausing before the grand figure of Trajan. What a boon to history would the Life of such a ruler have been! Perhaps he dictated the account of his Dacian campaigns, as Priscian seems to indicate by a citation,<sup>4</sup> but, apart from this, even the memory of anything resembling memoirs of Trajan has perished. His majestic Column in Rome and more majestic Arch at Beneventum, each containing his portrait, remain to remind us of him and to remind us further, in words adapted from Mommsen, that for his beneficent reign we possess little more than 'chiseled picture-books, from which too often the text is missing.'<sup>5</sup> Trajan's immediate successor, the versatile Hadrian, wrote his own life in a spirit of genial vanity. We learn from Spartianus that he was careful to remind his readers of the antiquity of his family, tracing it from the time of the Scipios, and to explain that his free use of wine was in consequence of the example of Trajan.<sup>6</sup> To avoid the appearance of self-esteem and thus gain greater credence for the story of his life, he commanded his

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius: Claudius 41, composuit de vita sua viii volumina magis inepte quam ineleganter. The statement in the third edition of Christ's Griechische Literaturgeschichte (p. 617) that Caligula wrote an autobiography is erroneous. It is a slip for Claudius. See Peter, Hist. Rom. Frag. p. 294, and Teuffel-Schwabe, 286.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus: Ann. iv 53, id ego . . . repperi in commentariis Agrippinae filiae.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus: Vita 65, p. 340, 18 bk., ἐν τοῖς Οὐδὲσπασιανοῦ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ὑπομνήμασιν οὕτω γέγραπται.

<sup>4</sup> Priscianus: Gramm. Lat. ii 205, 6, Traianus in I Dacicorum: inde Berzobim, deinde Aizi processimus.

<sup>5</sup> Mommsen: Römische Geschichte, v 204, Ed. 1885. 'Ein gemeisseltes Bilderbuch der dakischen Kriege, zu welchem uns fast überall der Text fehlt.'

<sup>6</sup> Spartianus: Hadrianus i I and iii 3

learned freedmen to publish it under their names, and the book passed for a short time as the work of Phlegon.<sup>1</sup>

About 170 Marcus Aurelius wrote his calmly complacent *Meditations*, which, though Roman in origin, belong to Greek literature. They spring from autobiographical suggestions, but do not compose an autobiography. Amid the general literary decline with which the third century opens, Septimius Severus (193-211) 'wrote the history of his public and private life with fidelity to truth,' as Spartianus judges, adding naïvely that Severus 'excused only his vice of cruelty' and 'kept quiet about his wife.'<sup>2</sup> The contemporary historian Dio Cassius, or Cassius Dio (as I believe we are now to call him), did not take so favorable a view. 'I relate things,' he quietly observes, 'not as Severus wrote them, but as they really happened.'<sup>3</sup> One more long step and we are at the opening of the fourth century, where with passing mention of the supposed memoirs of Constantine<sup>4</sup> (323-337), first Christian Emperor, this hurried recital of ancient Roman autobiographies may fitly close.

Some fragments of them remain, some mention by historians and some portions worked over and incorporated in other writers. Otherwise they have perished, unless the *Commentaries* of Julius Caesar are an exception. They are all of one type, objective narratives dealing with the scenes and events in which their authors mingled. They are composed with one purpose, avowed or concealed, the commendation of the writer to others. They are natural utterances of Roman pride, ranging all the way from

<sup>1</sup> Spartianus: Hadrianus xvi I

<sup>2</sup> Spartianus: Severus xviii 6, vitam suam privatam publicamque ipse composuit ad fidem, solum tantum vitium crudelitatis excusans. iii 2, uxorem . . . de qua tacuit in historia vitae privatae.

<sup>3</sup> Dio: 75, 7, λέγω γὰρ οὐχ ὅσα ὁ Σευήρος ἔγραψεν, ἀλλ' ὅσα ἀληθῶς ἐγένετο.

<sup>4</sup> Lydus: De Magistr. ii 30, ταῖς διαλέξεσι Κωνσταντίνου. ἄς αὐτὸς οἰκεία φωνῇ γράψας ἀπολέλοιπεν.

dignified self-vindication to vanity. Autobiography, as well as satire, should be credited to the Romans as their own independent invention.

#### IV

The appearance of Augustine's *Confessions* in 399 or 400<sup>1</sup> dates the entrance of a new kind of autobiography into Latin literature,—the autobiography of introspection, the self-registered record of the development of a human soul. It is literally a 'confession' of all that was in his mind and heart, an acknowledgment which does not omit the vile in conduct, the erroneous in thinking or the base in motive. Without reserve and yet not without shame, it is above all free from vanity, excuse or pride. It is, moreover, the history of a great spirit written with the mastery of genius. It is a book without an ancestor, and with no successor for almost a thousand years. From beginning to end it quivers with life, passion and power. There is a look of intense reality on every page, even at the times when Augustine is turning aside to view the abstract world-questions which so often thrust themselves into his life. As Adolf Harnack has acutely observed, the *Confessions* never degenerate into 'psychological discussions on the human understanding, will and emotions, or abstract researches on the soul, or superficial reasoning and moralizing self-contemplation as in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius,' but steadily present 'a definite portrait of one man.'<sup>2</sup> As we watch the workings of his spirit,

<sup>1</sup> This date is generally accepted, for the *Confessions* were almost certainly published within the year preceding Augustine's treatise *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*.

<sup>2</sup> Augustin's *Confessionen*, ein Vortrag von Dr. Adolf Harnack, p. 8, Giessen 1888. Harnack's penetrating critique should be read by all who would understand the place of the Con-

even in its tumults of rhetoric, we are constantly at a loss to decide what it is enchants us most,—the sweep of his restless observation, the convincing eloquence, or the vivid displays of reflection and imagination. How many of its phrases are memorable! much as they lose by translation. How many have entered into the commonplace of letters and philosophy! ‘None can be compelled against his will,’<sup>1</sup> ‘The things that are, are good,’<sup>2</sup> ‘The unlearned rise and seize the Kingdom of Heaven,’<sup>3</sup> ‘What is enough for safety is too little for delight,’<sup>4</sup> ‘To rise is one thing, not to fall another,’<sup>5</sup> ‘God alone rules without pride,’<sup>6</sup> ‘Happy he who loves Thee, his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee,’<sup>7</sup>—these are instances from the *Confessions*. From his lesser touches of description we may pick out ‘the troubled flow of time,’<sup>8</sup> ‘the great hall of memory,’<sup>9</sup> ‘the rule of perfection,’<sup>10</sup> ‘the flood of custom,’<sup>11</sup> ‘a dead life,’<sup>12</sup> and his styling temperance in meats ‘the bridle of the throat,’<sup>13</sup> ignorance ‘the mother of amazement,’<sup>14</sup> mortal man as ‘time devouring and by time devoured,’<sup>15</sup> his body ‘this earth I carry about,’<sup>16</sup> and light ‘the queen of colors.’<sup>17</sup> And these are but

fessions as a literary art work and classic of philosophy, though his sympathy with its meaning as a book of personal religion, while generous, is not complete.

<sup>1</sup> non cogeris invitus ad aliquid, vii 4

<sup>2</sup> quamdiu sunt, bona sunt, vii 12

<sup>3</sup> surgunt indocti et caelum rapiunt, viii 8

<sup>4</sup> quod saluti satis est, delectationi parum est, x 31

<sup>5</sup> aliud est cito surgere, aliud est non cadere, x 35

<sup>6</sup> solus sine typho dominaris, x 36

<sup>7</sup> beatus qui amat te, et amicum in te, et inimicum propter te, iv 9

<sup>8</sup> fluxum saeculorum turbulentum, ix 8

<sup>9</sup> aula ingenti memoriae, x 8

<sup>10</sup> regula perfectionis, iii 9

<sup>11</sup> flumen moris humani, i 16

<sup>12</sup> vitam mortuam, v 8

<sup>13</sup> freni gutturis, x 31

<sup>14</sup> ignorantia mater admirationis, xiii 21

<sup>15</sup> devorans tempora et devoratus temporibus, ix 4

<sup>16</sup> haec terra quam porto, xii 2

<sup>17</sup> regina colorum lux est, x 34



a few out of hundreds more<sup>1</sup> to be found in the little book that has been the favorite of all his writings from his own day until now.<sup>2</sup>

Is it not natural to suppose such a book would be interesting? Interesting indeed it has been in its influence on human thought and its fascination for a long series of readers, not the least of whom was Petrarch. 'Small in size!' he exclaims of his copy, 'but of infinite charm.'<sup>3</sup> Still to read it in English is not so very interesting. The unchecked rhetoric, the reiterated calls on God, varied and wearisome, the shrewd curiosity in hunting down subtleties to their last hiding places, the streaks of inane allegorizing, and sometimes the violent bursts of feeling,—these are the things that frighten away readers and prevent them from reaching the real delights of the book. Then he is so exuberant. For if Cicero's pen was full, Augustine's is fuller.

But read what he wrote, free from the disenchantment of translation, and the effect is different. The ineptitudes and infelici-

<sup>1</sup> It may not be superfluous to cite in a note these additional examples: *vespres libidinum*, 'the brambles of lust' ii 3; *eamus faciamus, et pudet non esse impudentem*, the formula of eager boyish mischief iii 9; *non vacant tempora*, 'time is never empty' iv 8; *arborum volatica folia*, 'the fluttering leaves of trees' vii 6; the moving plea *medicus es, aeger sum*; *misericors es, miser sum* x 28; the surprised recognition in *et ecce intus eras, et ego foris, et ibi te quaerebam* x 27; the frequent and ever-memorable *da quod iubes et iube quod vis* x 29; *pedissequa periculosa iocunditas*, 'pleasure is a dangerous waiting-maid' x 31; *consuetudinis sarcina*, 'the pack of

*habit'* x 40; *caro mihi valent stillae temporum*, 'precious to me are the drops of time' xi 2; the settled peace after the storm in the inimitable and untranslatable *evitando vivit anima quae adpetendo moritur* xiii 21; the somewhat gross but graphic *elixi stillam dulcedinis ex tua veritate*, 'I licked a drop of sweetness from thy truth' xiii 30, and the poetically tender *lunam et stellas consolari noctem* xiii 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Quid meorum opusculorum frequentius et delectabilius innotescere potuit, quam libri confessionum mearum?* Augustine, *De Dono Perseverantiae*, cap. xx.

<sup>3</sup> *Epp. Fam.* iv 1

ties soon shrink and the central power of the book appears. What writer, and particularly what old writer, is ever heard to the best advantage except in his own words? But thus read, even the less attractive things assume a place and propriety of their own, though they figure, in Shakspeare's phrase, merely as

‘furrow weeds,  
Darnel and many an idle flower that grows  
Mid the sustaining corn.’<sup>1</sup>

Augustine was born in 354. His *Confessions* recount the earlier part of his life, ending with his conversion to Christianity and the death of his mother Monnica in his thirty-third year. They consist of thirteen books, the first ten being his autobiography and the other three an appendix on the biblical account of Creation. The first book deals with his infancy and boyhood through his fifteenth year, the next five with his youth to his thirtieth year, the next three with his young manhood to his thirty-third year, and the tenth is a closing meditation in retrospect. Unlike some of the older Roman autobiographies and many of his own writings, this work is not addressed or dedicated to any of his fellow men. His *Confessions* are not addressed or dedicated in the literary sense at all, but are made in simplicity to God. ‘What have I to do with men,’ he asks, ‘that they should hear my confessions, as though they could heal my infirmities? Man is curious about the life of his fellow; careless about correcting his own. Why should they wish to hear from me what I am, when they are unwilling to hear from Thee what they are? And when they hear from me about myself, from what source can they learn whether I speak the truth? . . . But if they will only hear Thee about themselves, they will never be able to say, The Lord lies.’<sup>2</sup> So his sole concern is to learn what

<sup>1</sup> King Lear, iv 4

<sup>2</sup> Confessions x 3

he is in the eyes of his Maker, who alone understands him. It would be a misrepresentation to say this was the unvarying attitude of Augustine. It is his final attitude, attained through a fierce struggle, a battle to blood. Through that battle his moral and intellectual natures marched together, step by step, all the way. His story is so full of variety I despair of relating it. It is so tempestuous in feeling, lively in fancy, affluent in thought,—ingenuous when most subtle, childlike when most mature,—and so swift in its changes of light and shadow, that the author's own account must ever remain the only satisfying one.

The son of a hot-blooded, vulgar and somewhat intemperate pagan father, Patricius, and of a Christian mother, Monnica, the angel of his life, he embodies the most conflicting impulses. His story records them with unsparing frankness. Of his infancy he remembered nothing,<sup>1</sup> though he speculates much about it. He is a little puzzled to explain how, though his infancy died long ago, he is still alive.<sup>2</sup> Then he came from infancy to boyhood. Or did boyhood rather come to him? he inquires. Which came to the other? And what became of his infancy? Did it cease to be? He cannot solve his curious riddle.<sup>3</sup> Without getting into a 'divine despair' about it, like Tennyson, his thought of the vanished past is not unlike that poet's line:

'O Death in Life! the days that are no more!'<sup>4</sup>

His boyhood he remembers well. The first prayers he framed for himself were that he might not be whipped at school. He would not read and write as much as his teachers prescribed,

<sup>1</sup> Conf. i 6, *ista mea non memini.*

<sup>2</sup> Conf. i 6, *et ecce infantia mea olim mortua est, et ego vivo.*

<sup>3</sup> Conf. i 8, *nonne ab infantia huc pergens, veni in pueritiam; vel potius*

*ipsa in me venit, et successit infantiae? nec discessit illa; quo enim abiit? et tamen iam non erat.*

<sup>4</sup> Princess, iv.

as he preferred to play ball.<sup>1</sup> It seemed to him unjust his elders should call their chosen pursuits 'business,' and not be punished, if he was to be whipped for following his favorite occupation. Still he admits that for *tantillus puer* he was *et tantus peccator*.<sup>2</sup>

He does not know why he hated Greek and loved Latin, unless it was because Greek was a foreign language. He used to weep over the story of Dido, but seems to have been bored by the character of Aeneas and to have doubted whether he ever came to Carthage anyway, though he is afraid to put this question to his teacher.<sup>3</sup> Ages later, was it not the historian Gibbon, so deeply read in the classics, who wrote in like spirit in his Memoirs, 'I know not how, from some fault in the author, the translator, or the reader, the pious Aeneas did not so forcibly seize on my imagination.'<sup>4</sup> How Augustine hated the addition table! learned in a singsong way; *unum et unum duo, duo et duo quattuor, odiosa cantio*.<sup>5</sup> Studying Homer was bitter, though he grants the poet is *dulcissime vanus*.<sup>6</sup> But the morals of the gods in Homer, and in Terence too, disgusted him.<sup>7</sup> His declamations from Virgil in school won him great applause, but 'was it not all wind and smoke?'<sup>7</sup>

In his sixteenth year his studies were interrupted by a long vacation. It was at this time, as he says, 'the brambles of lust'<sup>8</sup> first struck root in his life. His mother's distress and warnings he set down as womanish nonsense.<sup>9</sup> So he began to 'walk the way of the streets of Babylon and to roll in its

<sup>1</sup> Conf. i 9, ludebam pila puer, et eo ludo impediabar, quo minus celeriter discerem litteras.

<sup>2</sup> Conf. i 12

<sup>3</sup> Conf. i 13

<sup>4</sup> Gibbon: Memoirs of My Life and Writings, ch. v

<sup>5</sup> Conf. i 13

<sup>6</sup> Conf. i 14

<sup>7</sup> Conf. i 17

<sup>8</sup> Conf. ii 3, vepres libidinum.

<sup>9</sup> Conf. ii 3, monitus muliebres.

mire as in spices and precious ointments,'<sup>1</sup> without let and without shame. He indulged in petty thieving, not from want, but from mere mischief.<sup>2</sup> The story of his plundering a neighbor's pear tree one stormy night and throwing the pears to the pigs is vividly told.<sup>3</sup> At seventeen he went to Carthage to attend the schools of rhetoric and philosophy. There he advanced swiftly in a career of sensuality,<sup>4</sup> revelling especially in the grosser indecencies of the theatres, theatres among the vilest the world has known.<sup>5</sup> One day he happened to pick up a copy of Cicero's *Hortensius* and read its eloquent exhortation to the study of philosophy. It startled him to think of his own conduct, when a pagan could thus speak to him of the love of truth and wisdom. 'I started to rise,' he cries out, 'that I might return to Thee.'<sup>6</sup> In spite of many starts to rise, fifteen years were yet to pass before he forsook his immoral habits.

Would Cicero satisfy him? Perhaps so, for of his mother's teachings he had kept nothing in practice and little in thought, as he writes, beyond the memory of the name of Christ.<sup>7</sup> Still he was roused, and so he plunged into the big books of the philosophers.<sup>8</sup> From his nineteenth to twenty-eighth year he was engrossed with the prevalent philosophy known as Manichaeism, a Persian dualism somewhat grossly imposed on Christian ideas,<sup>9</sup> teaching that good and evil are coördinately necessary and eternal. We need not follow him through its mazes.<sup>10</sup> He mastered it but remained unsatisfied, notwith-

<sup>1</sup> Conf. ii 3, iter agebam platearum Babyloniae, et volutabar in caeno eius tamquam in cinnamidis et unguentis pretiosis.

<sup>2</sup> Conf. ii 4 and 9

<sup>3</sup> Conf. ii 4

<sup>4</sup> Conf. iii 1

<sup>5</sup> Conf. iii 2

<sup>6</sup> Conf. iii 4, surgere coeperam, ut ad te redirem.

<sup>7</sup> Conf. iii 4

<sup>8</sup> Conf. iii 6

<sup>9</sup> Conf. v 6

<sup>10</sup> The writings of John Stuart Mill are not free from a Manichaean tinge. In his *Essays on Religion* (Essay I,

standing the gorgeous rhetoric of Faustus, its chief expounder, who was unable to answer Augustine's searching questions. 'Of what avail for my thirst was the most graceful profferer of the fairest goblet!'<sup>1</sup>

Seeking a greater career he left Carthage for Rome,<sup>2</sup> against the anguished entreaty of his mother. 'And I lied to my mother, and such a mother! and stole away. That night I secretly set forth, while she remained praying in tears. The breeze blew and filled our sails, and drew the shore from our sight' — what a Virgilian touch! In the early morning hours, as she watched the receding ship, Monnica *insaniebat dolore*.<sup>3</sup>

At Rome he fell ill with a severe fever.<sup>4</sup> On recovering he followed for a while the skepticism of the later Academics, 'who taught me,' he writes, 'that we ought to doubt everything and that nothing true can be known.'<sup>5</sup> He started lecturing on rhetoric in his house, but soon found, in one respect at least, things were done otherwise in Rome than at Carthage. His pupils, as the time for paying their fees approached, suddenly withdrew and attached themselves to a rival school in rhetoric. He admits he hated them for doing it, 'though not with a perfect hatred.'<sup>6</sup>

In disappointment he withdrew to Milan and obtained license from the prefect of that city to lecture on rhetoric there.<sup>6</sup> Am-

'Nature') he argues: 'The only admissible moral theory of creation is that the Principle of Good cannot at once and altogether subdue the powers of evil, either physical or moral; could not place mankind in a world free from the necessity of an incessant struggle with the maleficent powers, or make them always victorious in that struggle.' Essay III ('Theism') contains similar

reasoning. Manichaeism is specifically named in connection with his father's religious opinions (Autobiography, p. 40, New York 1874).

<sup>1</sup> Conf. v 6

<sup>2</sup> Conf. v 8

<sup>3</sup> Conf. v 9

<sup>4</sup> Conf. v 10

<sup>5</sup> Conf. v 12

<sup>6</sup> Conf. v 13



brose, bishop of Milan, later to exert so much influence on his life, received him kindly, and Augustine was at once impressed by his marked benignity.<sup>1</sup> By this time Monnica, travelling alone from Carthage, succeeded in joining her son, and was strangely comforted by Augustine's assurance that he was now neither a Manichaeian nor a Christian.<sup>2</sup> He was still unsatisfied and bent on attaining certitude. 'I wished to be as certain of things unseen,' he writes, 'as I was certain that seven and three make ten.'<sup>3</sup> But the necessity for some sort of belief for the affairs of life, even if demonstrated knowledge were out of reach, urged him on. He reasons that he believes he is the son of certain parents, a thing he could never know of himself, but must learn from others. The arrest of his intimate friend Alypius on an apparently well-founded but false charge of theft, coupled with the trial and subsequent proof that another was the thief, impressed these thoughts on Augustine still more. Alypius, whom he believed, was in his eyes just as worthy of confidence while under accusation, with the evidence seemingly against him, as afterward when he was proved to be innocent.<sup>4</sup>

Again he plunged into philosophy, studying the riddle of the world and life, and why evil should arise if all is the work of a good creator. He adopted Neoplatonism,<sup>5</sup> the last outcome of Greek philosophy. It was old Platonism tinged with Hindu pantheism. The doctrine of the Divine Reason, the Word or *Λόγος* whereby the Absolute One created the world, and all the consequences of this doctrine, fascinated him.<sup>6</sup> Here was a better answer to his riddle, but not enough of an answer to satisfy his heart. He read on and on in the books of Plotinus and Porphyry. How much he found, and how much he always failed

<sup>1</sup> Conf. v 13

<sup>2</sup> Conf. vi 1

<sup>3</sup> Conf. vi 4

<sup>4</sup> Conf. vi 9 and 10

<sup>5</sup> Conf. vii 9

<sup>6</sup> Conf. vii 9

to find! 'There I read of the λόγος that springs from God,' he writes, 'but that he was made man and dwelt among us, I did not read there.'<sup>1</sup> It was philosophy, after all, and not religion.

The crisis was fast approaching. Speculating on the helpfulness and yet the insufficiency of what he found, he was driven on, as he says, to think 'in the region of unlikeness'<sup>2</sup> on the vast difference between the ever-existing, all-sufficient Absolute One and himself. It is here he first breaks down, when the vision of God, as the only ground and reason for all other being, dawns upon him. 'And thou didst call to me from afar, "Most surely I am that I am."' And I heard as one hears in the heart, and straightway could doubt no more.'<sup>3</sup> He began reading St. Paul. A struggle to break with his past and give up the mistress, who had borne him a son, soon follows, and the ensuing misery of his 'two wills' distracts him.<sup>4</sup> His habits were not to be so easily abandoned. They kept muttering behind his back, he tells us, and twitching him by the sleeve, to make him look at them again.<sup>5</sup>

Torn by the conflict of will and feeling, he shunned his friends and sought retirement. Going into the garden one day, he flung himself on the ground beneath a fig-tree and called out in his distress, 'How long, how long? To-morrow and to-morrow! Why not now? Why not at this hour make an end of my vileness?' 'And lo! I hear a voice in a house near by, like the voice of a boy, or perhaps a girl, singing and saying over and over, Take it, read it; take it, read it. At once

<sup>1</sup> Conf. vii 9

<sup>2</sup> Conf. vii 10, in regione dissimilitudinis.

<sup>3</sup> Conf. vii 10, et clamasti de longinquo: Immo vero ego sum qui sum. et

audivi sicut auditur in corde, et non erat prorsus unde dubitarem.

<sup>4</sup> Conf. viii 6-10

<sup>5</sup> Conf. viii 11, veluti dorso mussitantes, et discedentem quasi furtim vellicantes, ut respicerem.

I began to think intently whether boys had any such jingle in their games, but none occurred to me.'<sup>1</sup> Augustine rose and walked to where he had left the book of St. Paul's Epistles. Opening at a venture, his eyes fell on the startling words, 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in contention and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the lusts of the flesh.'<sup>1</sup> In that moment his old life died. He closed the book. 'I had no will,' he writes, 'nor need to read beyond.' At such a scene, where silence is the fittest reverence, will words from a modern writer sound too strange and dissonant? It may be so. But if not, what late echo will so well repeat to us Augustine's abasement at that instant as the moving lines of Dryden:

' My thoughtless youth was winged with vain desires ;  
 My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,  
 Followed false lights ; and when their glimpse was gone,  
 My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.  
 Such was I, such by nature still I am ;  
 Be Thine the glory, and be mine the shame.'<sup>2</sup>

And why not hear Augustine's own graphic words in which he tells how the news was at once broken to Monnica,—'*Inde ad matrem ingredimur. Indicamus, gaudet.*'<sup>3</sup> How Roman! How Christian!

His baptism soon follows, and within a short time he starts to return with his mother to Carthage, to take up his new life in the scene of his old disgrace. They went to Ostia, the seaport of Rome, to wait for a ship, and rested for some days. It was there, as they stood together at their window overlooking an enclosed garden, those sublimely beautiful conversations occurred be-

<sup>1</sup> Conf. viii 12

<sup>3</sup> Conf. viii 12

<sup>2</sup> Hind and Panther, 72

tween mother and son, scarcely matched in all literature. 'So then we were talking alone and very sweetly (*valde dulciter*), forgetting the past and reaching forth toward that which is before.'<sup>1</sup> English cannot reproduce them fairly.

Monnica was not to see Carthage again. In a few days she succumbed to fever and died. It is in this part of the *Confessions*, the ending of the ninth book, we are irresistibly carried away by its pathos and beauty. Who can translate it? Not I. The condition of Augustine after his mother's death was at first one of tearless stupefaction. His grief turned him to stone. He records the funeral as though he were an unconcerned spectator: *Cum ecce corpus elatum est, imus, redimus sine lacrimis.*<sup>2</sup> But the misery of what he had been and what he had lost soon surged over him in overwhelming force, and the tragic strain became too great. Death or some easier remedy had to come. And at last the spell of his agony was broken, as he lay wakeful on his couch, by the magical touch of that most musical evening hymn of Ambrose:

Deus creator omnium  
Polique rector, vestiens  
Diem decoro lumine,  
Noctem sopora gratia.<sup>3</sup>

The swift relief of tears followed, and Augustine, the man who had lied to his mother, the sensualist, the accomplished rhetorician, the subtle philosopher, again became a child.

Such in palest copy is the picture painted from life in Augustine's *Confessions*.

<sup>1</sup> Conf. ix 10. Colloquebamur ergo soli valde dulciter; et praeterita obliviscentes, in ea quae sunt ante extenti, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Conf. ix 12

<sup>3</sup> Conf. ix 12, 'O God, Maker of all and Ruler of the World, who dost robe the day with beauteous light and night with the grace of sleep.'

'Autobiography' is an old-looking word. Yet its corresponding original occurs nowhere in the whole range of ancient and mediæval Greek and Latin known to us.<sup>1</sup> It is of modern coinage, and almost certainly of English coinage about the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Still the writing of autobiographies in both kinds, the objective and introspective,—the latter sometimes styled Confessions in imitation of Augustine,—has long been practiced in English and other modern literatures. But, though fifteen centuries have passed, which of the many Confessions surpasses the first one? Coleridge's '*Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*,' 'confessions,' he says, 'of one who is neither fair nor saintly,'<sup>3</sup> though similar in tone, is too slight to be set over against Augustine. De Quincey's '*Confessions of an English Opium Eater*' is more important. But with all its candor and dramatic power, it lacks one thing, the charm of entire freedom from self-excuse. And what of the greatest of modern '*Confessions*'? the astonishing book of Rousseau,—capricious, brilliant, unsparing, sentimental—and vain. 'I have entered on a performance,' he writes, 'which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean to present my fellow mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature; and this man shall be myself.' 'Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the Sovereign Judge with this book in my hand, and say aloud, Thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I. With equal freedom and veracity have I related what

<sup>1</sup> Even 'biography' is comparatively modern. Its original occurs nowhere in ancient or mediæval Latin, so far as we know, though *biographus* is found in the mediæval period. The sole recorded instance of *βιογραφία* first oc-

curs in the ninth-century lexicon of Photius. I have found no instance of *βιογραφος*.

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix on 'Autobiography.'

<sup>3</sup> In 'Letter I'

was laudable or wicked; I have concealed no crimes, added no virtues. . . . Such as I was, I have declared myself; sometimes vile and despicable, at others virtuous, generous and sublime. . . . Assemble round Thy throne an innumerable throng of my fellow mortals; let them listen to my confessions, let them grieve at my indignities, let them blush at my miseries; let each in his turn expose with equal sincerity at the foot of Thy throne the wanderings of his heart, and, if he dare, aver, I was better than that man.'<sup>1</sup>

In closing this lecture, let us hear by way of contrast, Augustine's letter to a friend, sent with a copy of his book. 'Take then the books of my *Confessions* you have desired. Therein behold me, lest you praise me beyond what I am. Therein believe me, and not others about me, and behold what I was in myself and of myself. If aught in me pleases you, then with me praise Him who should be praised concerning me; for it is He who made us, and not we ourselves: and we have lost ourselves, but He who made us has remade us. And when you find me therein, pray for me that I fail not, but persevere.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau's *Confessions*; opening paragraphs. Orson's translation, London 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 231, Dario Comiti; Benedictine edition.



## APPENDIX

### 'AUTOBIOGRAPHY'

#### 1.

See the article 'Autobiographie' in the *Dictionnaire Universelle* of Larousse. No instance of 'autobiography' or any of its kin is in any eighteenth-century edition of Johnson's *Dictionary*. Murray's *New English Dictionary* records nothing earlier than a quotation from Southey, under date of 1809. All instances cited in other dictionaries I have been able to consult are later. The hyphenating of 'auto-biography,' 'auto-biographer' and the like, in books printed about 1840-1850 and even as late as 1853 in the *London Quarterly Review* (I 494 *sqq.*), seems to indicate the comparative newness of these compounds.

Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography* is styled so in the opening sentence: 'The circumstances that led to this Autobiography will transpire in the course of it.' De Quincey, writing in 1853, divided his own works into 'autobiographical sketches,' 'essays' and 'confessions.'

#### 2.

The instance from Southey in Murray's *New English Dictionary* should be hyphenated ('auto-biographer') as printed in Southey's essay in the *Quarterly Review* for May, 1809. There is a doubly capitalized and hyphenated 'Auto-Biographer' applied sarcastically to Coleridge by Hazlitt in the *Edinburgh Review* for August, 1817. Coleridge is even more emphatic, using four capitals! He writes of a book he projected, but

never succeeded in publishing, that its preface was to be 'illustrated by fragments of AUTO-biography' (Letter of September 12, 1814, vol. ii. 632, in edition of Ernest Hartley Coleridge, Boston 1895). Then there is the apparently unique 'Autobiographia' in Coleridge's letter of July 29, 1815: 'What I first intended as a preface to an "Autobiographia Literaria."' (*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, by Campbell, London 1894, p. 212.) Bearing in mind his fondness for making terms out of classical elements, is not Coleridge most likely the coiner of 'autobiography'?

3.

'Autobiography' and its relatives appear in English dictionaries soon after 1820 and in French, German and Italian dictionaries somewhat later. A remarkably early German instance occurs in the twenty-seventh chapter of Jean Paul Richter's *Leben Fibel's*, composed at intervals from 1806 to 1811 and first printed in 1812. It reads: 'Was man Selbstlebensbeschreibung, Autobiographie, Confessions u. s. w. nennt.' This is the sole instance of 'Autobiographie' and of 'Selbstlebensbeschreibung' in the book. Jean Paul's wavering use of capitals and the hyphen in 'Selbstlebensbeschreibung' 'Selbst-Lebensbeschreiber' (chapter 22) and 'Selbst-Beschreiber' (chapter 27) is closely like the unstable earlier manner of printing 'autobiography' in English. 'Autobiographie' in Jean Paul may have intimate relation to Coleridge's use of the word, but it does not seem likely that Jean Paul is the inventor.

4.

The carelessness of editors in printing 'Autobiography' as a title-word of books not styled so by their authors is common enough. In the '*Autobiography and Life of Robert Blair*,' who died in 1666, the word 'autobiography' is nowhere in the text of M'Crie's edition, transcribed from the original manuscript (Edinburgh 1848). The title-word is evidently the editor's, not



and the journey I took for that purpose.  
 Now imagining it may be equally  
 agreeable to you to know the Cir-  
 cumstances of my Life, before  
 your Eyes, many of which you  
 are yet unacquainted with; and  
 expecting a Weeks uninterrupted  
 Leisure in my present Country  
 Retirement, I set down to write  
 them for your Benefit. To  
 which I have besides some other  
 Additions. Having among  
 from Poverty & Obscurity, in which  
 I was born & bred, to a State of  
 Affluence & some Degree of Esteem  
 in the World, the Success I made  
 use of that conduct to that  
 and having gone so far this  
 Life with a good share of Fel-  
 icity, the conducting Means  
 I made use of, which, so well suc-  
 ceeded, my Posterity may like  
 to have ~~and~~ <sup>as they</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>as they</sup> know, and  
 my find some of them suitable to  
 their own Situations, & therefore  
 fit to be imitated. That Fel-  
 icity, when I reflected on it, has  
 indeed me sometimes to say, that  
 were it offer'd to my Choice, I should  
 have no Objection to a Repetition  
 of the same Life from its Begin-  
 ning, only asking the Advantages  
 which I should have in a second Edition  
 to correct the Faults of the first.  
 So would I change some sinister  
 Accidents for others more favourable  
 if I thought but that this were doing  
 I should still quest the Offer. And  
 that since this is not to be expected,  
 the next thing most like to bring me  
 to my End, is to be a good Man.  
 Dear Son,  
 Twyford at the Bishop of St. Asaph's 1771  
 I have ever had a Pleasure in  
 obtaining a little Repository of  
 Anecdotes of my Ancestors. You  
 may remember the Enquiries I made  
 among the Remains of my Relations  
 when you were with me in England,  
 The Notes upon one of my Uncles  
 (who had the same kind of  
 Character, <sup>in something resembling Family, Ancestry</sup>) once put into my Hands  
 furnished me with several Particulars  
 relating to our Family, <sup>which I cannot that the Fa-</sup>  
 mily had liv'd in the same Village,  
 Eton in Northamptonshire, for 300  
 Years, I how much longer he knew  
 I did not <sup>probably possibly from the Time when</sup>  
 I was born <sup>in the Parish of St. Asaph</sup> <sup>about 50 Years</sup> <sup>ago</sup> <sup>the Smith's</sup>  
 Business, which had continued in  
 the Family till his Time, the eldest  
 Son of the Family being always bred  
 to that Business. — When I searched  
 the Parish <sup>at Eton</sup> I found an Ac-  
 count of their Brothers, Marriages  
 and Burials, from 1555 only, there  
 being no Register kept in that Parish  
 at any time preceding. By that Register I found that I was  
 the youngest Son of the youngest Son  
 for 5 Generations back. My Grand-  
 father Thomas, who was born in 1598  
 lived at Eton till he grew too old to  
 follow Business longer, when he went  
 to live with his Son John, a Dyer  
 at Banbury in Oxfordshire, where  
 with whom my Father served an Appren-  
 tice. There my grandfather died.

Photograph of first page of the autograph manuscript of Franklin's 'Autobiography'; about two fifths natural size. There is no title. The only entries at the top of the page are the figure 1 over the left column, the words 'Dear Son' and the place and date ('Twyford at the Bishop of St. Asaph's 1771') over the right column.

the author's. One edition of the memoirs of Gibbon I have consulted prints 'Autobiography' in one place, 'Life' in another and the correct 'Memoirs' in another, as the title. The series of some thirty volumes printed in London from 1820 to 1830, under the proper enough general title *Autobiography*, contains a lot of autobiographies, but not one of them is so named by its author. 'Autobiography' as a title-word in books written earlier than the nineteenth century is presumably not the author's title.

5.

Franklin's '*Autobiography*,' as it is commonly called, has special interest for Americans. As it is all but certain the term did not exist in his time, some other heading seems more appropriate, if only to avoid the implication that he used a word which did not then exist. 'Autobiography' is nowhere in the text of Bigelow's final and only standard edition, reproduced directly from Franklin's autograph (*The Life of Franklin, Written by Himself*. Edited by the Hon. John Bigelow. Fourth edition, Philadelphia 1900). As there is no title or suggestion of a title-word in the body of the text, I sought to ascertain what heading, if any, Franklin had given his book. By Mr. Bigelow's courtesy I have personally examined the autograph manuscript. Franklin wrote no title whatever! as appears from the accompanying photograph I had made of the first page of the manuscript last November. Mr. Bigelow's title, '*The Life of Franklin*,' though necessarily not the author's, is most appropriate, because it not only describes the book properly, as indeed 'autobiography' does, but also accords with literary usage in Franklin's time, as 'autobiography' does not.

6.

It would be interesting to trace the course of nineteenth-century autobiographies in English literature. Individualism comes in like a flood. 'These autobiographical times of ours!' is

Carlyle's amused ejaculation. The influences of the French Revolution, mediated through Coleridge and others, are manifest at the start, diminishing as the native tone asserts itself more and more. The number of these self-written Lives is very large, large enough to be disquieting. *Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim*. It wakens the fear anybody may feel warranted in writing his Life for public perusal and that the question whether everybody's Life is worth printing will be dismissed as unnecessary, if not invidious.















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